

Message Text

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R 280500Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9753
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 KABUL 6952

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AF
SUBJ: PARTY AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE IN AFGHANISTAN

1. SUMMARY: AFTER FOUR MONTHS IN POWER, THE REVOLUTIONARY REGIME OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (DRA) IS GRADUALLY REVEALING THE WAY IT IS GOVERNING THE COUNTRY. MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND ULTIMATELY BY THE FEW MEN WHO HOLD SEATS ON THE POLITICAL BUREAU, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT APPEAR CHARGED SOLELY WITH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION. THE PATTERN OF THE EXISTING POWER STRUCTURE, HIGHLIGHTED BY THE APPARENTLY COMPLETE DOMINATION OF THE PARTY OVER ALL OTHER ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL POWER (INCLUDING THE MILITARY), DOES NOT DIFFER MUCH FROM SIMILAR SYSTEMS IN OTHER LEFTIST, ONE-PARTY STATES AROUND THE

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WORLD. THE POLICY ROLE OF THE APPROX 3,000 SOVIET ADVISERS IS NOT KNOWN, BUT THEY PROBABLY WOULD CONSIDERABLE INDIRECT INFLUENCE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. AT THE MOMENT, THE PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI AND POLITBURO MEMBER HAFIZULLAH AMIN CLEARLY CONTROL THE LEVERS OF POLITICAL POWER.

2. HOW LONG THIS SITUATION WILL LAST REMAINS TO BE SEEN, SINCE

IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT THAT PROMINENT LEADERS CAN FALL FROM GRACE VERY QUICKLY AS EVIDENCED BY THE AUGUST 17 REMOVAL OF DEFENSE MINISTER ABDUL QADER. MOREOVER, THE PARTY IS IN THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING UNDISPUTED CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES, AND WHILE THIS PROCESS COULD LEAD TO SOME POLITICAL UPHEAVAL, THIS REGIME HAS SO FAR BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN OVERCOMING ANY ALLEGED MILITARY OPPOSITION. END OF SUMMARY.

3. THE INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATE BETWEEN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT ORGANS:

A. PDPA POLITICAL BUREAU:

DESPITE PUBLIC PROTESTATIONS THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC) OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN (PDPA) DOMINATES POLITICAL AFFAIRS, ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE PDPA IS THE PRIMARY POLICY-MAKING BODY. THE POLITBURO IS PARAMOUNT IN INTERNAL PARTY MATTERS, AS UNDERScoreD BY THE POLITBURO'S DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO DETERMINE THE SIZE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE CC, A SITUATION WHICH DOES NOT DIFFER FROM THE POLITICAL REALITIES EXISTING IN OTHER ONE-PARTY, LEFTIST STATES. THE POLITBURO'S SIZE AND MEMBERSHIP ARE NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR, AS TO DATE ONLY FIVE MEN HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED AS POLITBURO MEMBERS: PDPA SECRETARY-GENERAL AND PRIME MINISTER NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI; POLITBURO SECRETARY, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAFIZULLAH AMIN; PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER AND ACTING MINISTER OF PLANNING DR. SHAH WALI; EDUCATION MINISTER DASTAGIR PANJSHIRI; AND, FINANCE MINISTER ABDUL KARIM MISAQ. OTHER LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN NAMED BY VARIOUS SOURCES AS POLITBURO

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MEMBERS ARE: PLANNING MINISTER SULTAN ALI KISHTMAND (WHO WAS ARRESTED FOR CONSPIRACY ON AUGUST 23); AGRICULTURE MINISTER DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZIRI; RADIO AND TV MINISTER SULAIMAN LEIQ; AND, CULTURE AND INFORMATION MINISTER MOHAMMAD HASSAN BAREQ-SHAFEYE. BASED ON NEWS REPORTS, THE POLITBURO MEETS EVERY SATURDAY, AND BRIEF SUMMARIES OF ITS DECISIONS ARE GENERALLY CARRIED IN THE FOLLOWING DAY'S NEWS-PAPERS. WE ARE FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT NO MILITARY OFFICERS HOLD POLITBURO

MEMBERSHIP, A FACTOR WHICH REFLECTS THE CURRENT STRATEGY OF THE CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP TO ESTABLISH ITS ABSOLUTE CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES.

B. PDPA SECRETARIAT:

ADMINISTRATION OF PARTY AFFAIRS, RATHER THAN POLICYMAKING, IS THE TRADITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY OF A LEFTIST PARTY'S SECRETARIAT, AND THE PDPA SECRETARIAT APPEARS TO PLAY THIS ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN. THUS, AGAIN, THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE PDPA DO NOT DEVIATE FROM THE GENERAL NORM ELSEWHERE IN THE LEFTIST WORLD. ASIDE FROM TARAKI AND AMIN, DR. SHAH WALI HAS BEEN THE ONLY LEADER PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED AS A MEMBER OF THE PDPA SECRETARIAT (THUS INDICATING HE MAY BE THE NUMBER-THREE RANKING OFFICIAL IN THE COUNTRY). (SHAH WALI ALSO HEADED THE "HIGH-POWERED" AFGHAN DELEGATION WHICH WENT TO CUBA IN

JULY AMID MUCH PUBLICITY AND FANFARE.) WE PRESUME, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE OTHER PARTY SECRETARIES, AND, IN THIS CONNECTION, BAREQ-SHAFEYE AND LAIQ (BOTH MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AND PROBABLY OF THE POLITBURO) HAVE ALSO BEEN DESCRIBED BY OTHER SOURCES AS MEMBERS

OF THE SECRETARIAT, AS HAVE ALSO THE OTHER TWO PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO: PANJSHIRI AND MISAQ.

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

C. PDPA CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC):
THE PDPA CC, WHICH REPORTEDLY MEETS ONCE A MONTH, THEORETICALLY CONSTITUTES THE HIGHEST PDPA AUTHORITY, A THEME WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLIC-

LY REPEATED BY VARIOUS OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN OVER THE PAST FOUR MONTHS. INFORMATION REGARDING CC MEMBERSHIP HAS BEEN SCANT. AMIN RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT NOT ALL CABINET MINISTERS HOLD CC MEMBERSHIP,

AND, ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW THE MINISTERS TO WHICH HE WAS REFERRING, GIVEN RECENT EVENTS, HE MAY HAVE MEANT THAT THE MILITARY CABINET

MEMBERS DO NOT SIT ON THE CC. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CC IS PROBABLY

A SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER BODY THAN THE CABINET (WHICH HAS, AT THE
MOMENT, 16 MEMBERS). IN THIS REGARD, IT WAS ANNOUNCED ON AUGUST 12
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THAT THE PDPA POLITBURO HAD DECIDED TO EXPAND THE SIZE OF THE CC
THROUGH THE ELECTION OF ADDITIONAL FULL AND CANDIDATE MEMBERS.
NO NUMBERS WERE INCLUDED IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT, HOWEVER, BUT AMIN
RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE CC NOW HAS "ABOUT FORTY"
MEMBERS (KABUL 6648).

D. REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC):

THE RC, WHILE NOT A PDPA BODY, IS COMPLETELY STAFFED BY PARTY
MEMBERS, ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS BY TARAKI IN HIS FIRST POST-REVO-
LUTION PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 13. AT THAT TIME, HE SAID THAT THE
COUNCIL HAD 35 MEMBERS (OF WHICH FIVE WERE MILITARY). WE ALSO WERE
TOLD THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET WERE MEMBERS OF THE RC. ON JUNE
12 IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE RC WOULD BE EXPANDED BY THIRTEEN
MEMBERS. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVED AT THAT TIME THAT THIS EXPANSION
WAS DESIGNED TO BRING MORE MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY INTO THE MAINSTREAM

OF POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING, ALTHOUGH NEITHER THE SPECIFIC MEMBER-
SHIP OF THE COUNCIL, NOR THE IDENTITIES OF THOSE ADDED HAS EVER
BEEN REVEALED.

E. CABINET:

THE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE DRA ARE CARRIED OUT BY THE CABINET AND
THE REGULAR GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, WHICH, AS NOTED ABOVE,
ARE ALL HEADED BY PDPA MEMBERS, WITH PRIME MINISTER TARAKI AT
THE PINNACLE. THUS, THE HOLDING OF DOMINANT GOVERNMENT AND PARTY
POSITIONS BY THE SAME INDIVIDUALS REPRESENTS A CLASSIC "INTERLOCKING
DIRECTORATE" COMMON TO MOST LEFTIST REGIMES AROUND THE WORLD, A
DEVICE WHICH GUARANTEES CONTROL OF ESSENTIAL POLITICAL FUNCTIONS
BY A SELECTED FEW TRUSTED PARTY MEMBERS.

4. THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS: HARD INFORMATION REGARDING HOW POLICY
IS MADE WITHIN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT,
A FACT WHICH, IN COMPARISON, MAKES OUR LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THE
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MEMBERSHIP OF THESE VARIOUS BODIES SEEM IMMENSE. NEVERTHELESS, A
LOOK AT THE PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED DECISIONS MADE BY THE ORGANIZATIONS
PROVIDES SOME INDICATION OF THE PREVAILING "DIVISION OF LABOR"
AMONG THESE BODIES, AND THEREBY CLUES AS TO WHO IS ACTUALLY MAKING,
AS OPPOSED TO CARRYING OUT, POLICY DECISIONS.

A. THE POLITBURO'S ROLE:

THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE PDPA IS CLEARLY NOT ONLY THE PREDOMINANT POLICY-MAKING ORGANIZATION, BUT ALSO THE ULTIMATE ARBITER OF MAJOR PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, AS WELL AS SUPREMEM JUDGE REGARDING INTERNAL PARTY MATTERS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE POLITBURO HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE FOLLOWING DECISIONS, INTER ALIA: TO ENLARGE THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE,

AND REORGANIZE THE PDPA STRUCTURE (JULY 8); TO ORGANIZE PDPA ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, AND TO SEND AN AFGHAN DELEGATION TO CUBA

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THAT COUNTRY'S REVOLUTION (JULY 22); TO FORMULATE NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS DESIGNED TO BOOST INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (AUGUST 12); AND , TO ISSUE ORDERS FOR THE ARREST OF DEFENSE MINISTER ABDUL QADER AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SHAHPOOR (AUGST 17), AS WELL AS FOR THE ARREST OF PLANNING MINISTER KISHTMAND AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER RAFIE (AUGST 23). THUS, MAJOR DECISIONS OF POTENTIALLY FAR-REACHING IMPACT ARE APPARENTLY MADE BY THE SMALL GROUP OF FEWER THAN TEN MEN COMPRISING THE PDPA'S DOMINANT ORGANIZATION, AND ARE ANNOUNCED THROUGH THE PARTY APPARATUS, RATHER THAN THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT.

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B. PDPA SECRETARIAT'S ROLE:

THE POLICY DECISIONS OF THE POLITBURO ARE PUBLICLY ISSUED BY THE SECRETARIAT, BUT THE LATTER BODY APPARENTLY HAS LITTLE, IF ANY DECISION-MAKING POWERS OF ITS OWN, SINCE THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OF REGULAR SECRETARIAT MEETINGS OR DECISIONS. THUS, THE SECRETARIAT APPEARS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THE PARTY APPARATUS, THEREBY FULFILLING ITS DUTIES AS SPECIFIED IN ARTICLE 22 OF THE PDPA "CONSTITUTION" (KABUL A-60). AS SPECIFIED IN THAT ARTICLE, THE SECRETARIAT CARRIES OUT DECISIONS OF HIGHER PARTY BODIES, AND IS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE POLITBURO.

C. PDPA CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S ROLE:

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THE CC MEETS ABOUT ONCE A MONTH, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING THE RESULTS OF ANY SUCH CONFIDENTIAL

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SESSIONS. WHETHER THE CC'S INCREASED SIZE FOLLOWING THE AUGUST 12 ANNOUNCEMENT WILL RESULT IN A MORE CENTRAL AND ACTIVE POLITICAL ROLE FOR THIS BODY REMAINS TO BE SEEN. GIVEN THE PRESENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IN AFGHANISTAN, WE DOUBT THAT THE SMALL GROUP OF MEN AT THE TOP WILL DELEGATE MUCH REAL AUTHORITY TO THE LARGER PARTY ORGANIZATIONS.

D. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL'S ROLE:

TO DATE, SIX DECREES HAVE BEEN ISSUED IN THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC), DEALING WITH SUBJECTS RANGING FROM STRIPPING THE FORMER ROYAL FAMILY OF ITS AFGHAN CITIZENSHIP (DECREE NUMBER FIVE), TO LAND REFORM (DECREE NUMBER SIX). CONCEIVABLY, THE COUNCIL, WHICH IS DESCRIBED BY THE DRA LEADERSHIP AS THE SUPREME GOVERNMENTAL BODY, COULD EVOLVE INTO THE COUNTRY'S PARLIAMENTARY BODY -- SINCE IT APPEARS TO FULFILL A FEW OF THESE FUNCTIONS NOW -- ALTHOUGH THE RC MAY ULTIMATELY BE ABOLISHED IN FAVOR OF SOME OTHER "ELECTED" LEGISLATURE. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE RC'S ROLE SEEMS LIMITED TO AD HOC PRONOUNCEMENTS ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES.

E. THE CABINET'S ROLE:

THE CABINET APPEARS TO FOCUS ITS ATTENTION ON THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES, AND LESS ON LOFTIER POLICY QUESTIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS, THE CABINET HAS DECIDED

ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: TO ESTABLISH IMPORT CONTROLS ON VARIOUS ITEMS, AND ISSUE INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE ASSIGNMENT AND MAINTENANCE

OF PUBLIC HOUSING, AS WELL AS CIVIL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION (JULY 9); TO ORDER THE GOVERNMENT TO PURCHASE DOMESTICALLY-PRODUCED WHEAT, TO PERMIT AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AFGHAN PILGRIMS PERMITTED TO MAKE THIS YEAR'S HAJ TO MECCA, AND TO DEVISE PROCEDURES FOR THE DRAFTING AND ORGANIZATION OF THE NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN (JULY 16); TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ANNOUNCE AFGHAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SCIENCE, AND TO CONCLUDE SEVERAL BILATERAL CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC AGREEMENTS (JULY 23); AND, TO FORMULATE THE CHARTERS FOR AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES (AUGUST 13). THUS, BASED ON ITS ANNOUNCED DECISIONS, THE CABINET APPEARS TO BE CHARGED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMS DECIDED UPON EARLIER BY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PDPA.

5. THE MEN IN CHARGE: TARAKI IS STILL NUMBER ONE, BUT AMIN IS A NOT-TOO-DISTANT SECOND, AND IS REGARDED BY SOME OBSERVERS AS THE REAL POWER BEHIND THE THRONE. THE TARAKI CULT OF PERSONALITY IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, AND HE IS CONSTANTLY LAUDED BY THE GOVT-CONTROLLED

MEDIA AS THE "GREAT LEADER", THE "SON OF THE PEOPLE", ETC. ACCORDING TO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS, TARAKI CHAIRS THE CABINET AND POLITBURO MEETINGS, AND HEADS THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. HE IS, FOR THE PRESENT, THE DOMINANT POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY, ALTHOUGH HOW LONG THIS WILL REMAIN THE CASE IS UNCERTAIN, GIVEN TARAKI'S AGE (61), AMIN'S AMBITIONS, THE UNSTABLE DOMESTIC SITUATION, AND THE NATURE OF THIS REGIME, WHICH SEEMS TO DEVOUR NOT ONLY ITS PERCEIVED ENEMIES, BUT MANY OF ITS OWN KIND AS WELL.

6. AS NOTED ABOVE, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER AMIN HAS CLEARLY EMERGED AS THE SECOND MOST POWERFUL POLITICO IN AFGHANISTAN, A FACT THAT PROBABLY STEMS FROM HIS REPORTED MAJOR PRE-REVOLUTION ROLE AS THE PDPA LEADER RESPONSIBLE FOR PARTY RECRUITMENT AND ORGANIZATION WITHIN THE AFGHAN MILITARY. THIS EXPERIENCE, AND THE PERSONAL LOYALTIES WHICH AMIN DEVELOPED IN THE ARMED FORCES, MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THE DECIDING FACTOR IN THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO RETAIN (SO FAR, AT LEAST) THE SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY DURING THE VARIOUS PHASES OF INTERNAL POLITICAL IN-FIGHTING, ESPECIALLY DURING THE PERIOD FOLLOWING THE ARREST OF FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GENERAL ABDUL QADER. SHOULD THE REGIME SURVIVE ITS STILL ROCKY SHAKE-DOWN PHASE, AMIN COULD WELL EMERGE AS THE ULTIMATE LEADER OF AFGHANISTAN, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE IS TEN YEARS YOUNGER THAN TARAKI, (THE LATTER ALSO REPORTEDLY HAS HEALTH PROBLEMS), AND AMIN ENJOYS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. ANY CHANGE IN THE

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RELATIONS BETWEEN THESE TOP TWO LEADERS WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS.

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7. SOVIET ROLE REMAINS MURKY: THE ROLE OF THE SOME THREE THOUSAND SOVIET ADVISORS IN THE REGIME'S CIVILIAN AND MILITARY BUREAUCRACY REMAINS UNCLEAR, ALTHOUGH THEIR INFLUENCE IS PROBABLY EXTENSIVE. WHILE THERE IS NO FIRM EVIDENCE AS YET THAT SOVIET ADVISERS ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE PDPA'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, MOSCOW'S POLICY VIEWS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY WELL-KNOWN TO THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP, AND ARE CERTAINLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT DURING POLITBURO DELIBERATIONS. SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE AFGHAN ARMED FORCES WILL REMAIN A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN THE POLITICAL EQUATION FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

8. CONCLUSIONS: AFGHANISTAN IS BEING GOVERNED IN A FASHION SIMILAR TO THAT EXISTING IN MANY OTHER LEFTIST ONE-PARTY COUNTRIES. THE FEW TOP LEADERS WEAR SEVERAL HATS (BOTH GOVT AND PARTY), THE MAJOR POLICY DECISIONS ARE MADE BY THE DOMINANT PARTY
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ORGANIZATION, AND THE IMAGE OF ONE-MAN RULE HAS EMERGED VIA THE CREATION OF A TARAKI CULT OF PERSONALITY. ANOTHER CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTIC, THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE PARTY-CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP OVER THE MILITARY, AND THE LATTER'S UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE TO PARTY ORDERS,

IS STILL FORMING, BUT IS UNDERSCORED BY THE RECENT ARRESTS OF KEY MILITARY FIGURES. TARAKI, AMIN, AND THE OTHER PARTY VETERANS ARE SEEMINGLY FIRMLY IN CHARGE, EVEN THOUGH THEIR PERSONAL SECURITY AND THAT OF THE REGIME RESTS ON THEIR ABILITY TO KEEP THE MILITARY SUBSERVIENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, STRUCTURE, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL06952
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780351-0153
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780818/aaaaaoye.tel
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 9
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
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Review Release Event: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
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Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AF
To: STATE
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014